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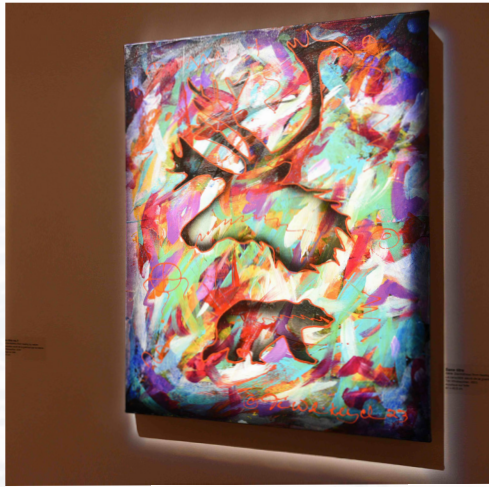
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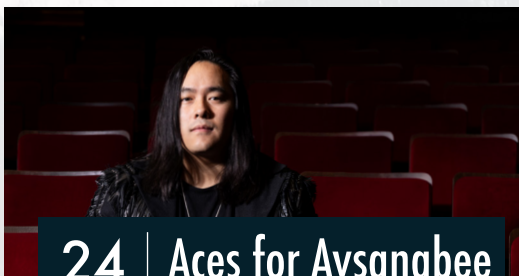
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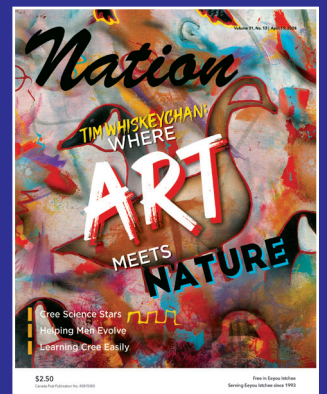
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Painting by Tim Whiskeychan

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Snaring the sun

by Lyle Stewart

There's little wonder why the ancients were in a state of shock and panic during a total solar eclipse. Many cultures feared the "end of times" or some other impending catastrophe during an eclipse.

When I experienced this phenomenon in Montreal April 8, I felt a range of emotions, some of which were difficult to identify. There were goosebumps, a feeling of apprehension, but most of all an overwhelming sense of awe witnessing the disappearance of the sun in a drawn-out, surreal fashion.

Indigenous peoples, including the Cree, have many legends surrounding an eclipse. As Eastmain's Jamie Moses recounted to APTN, his grandfather told him a story of how Chikabesh once snared the sun. "It could have been an eclipse at that time," Moses said. "That is a reference of some people relating to the eclipse of having nighttime in the middle of the day."

In ancient China, it was believed that a solar eclipse occurred when a celestial dragon devoured the sun. To frighten away the dragon and save the sun, people would bang drums and make loud noises during an eclipse.

According to Choctaw legend, an eclipse is caused by a mischievous black squirrel that gnaws on the sun. Like the Chinese dragon, the squirrel must be chased away by people yelling and making a ruckus.

For myself, during the complete eclipse, when we could look at the sky with the naked eye, it was almost an out-of-body sensation. One that I had never lived before, and one which I likely never

will again. The gradual dimming of light before a sudden darkness and a precipitous drop in temperature during what had been a warm and sunny early spring day. Most of all, the brief but stupendous beauty of the ring of light around a circle of black where the sun should appear.

Just like the ancient Chinese or Choctaw rituals, people instinctively cheered and yelled together during the complete blocking out of the sun.

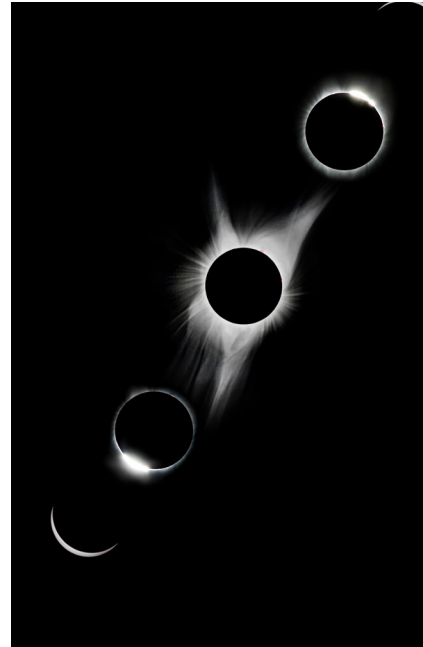
Of course, I understand what happened on an intellectual level. The moon's orbit coincided with our planet's route around the sun, momentarily blocking the light and warmth of our star. That matter-of-fact description makes it sound banal.

But it wasn't. And I wasn't prepared for the impact it had. There was something elemental and even terrifying, a realization that we are ultimately at the mercy of natural powers far beyond our ability to control. As well, that we exist thanks to an unimaginably tiny level of chance based on the earth's perfect distance from the sun.

We cannot live without the energy of the sun, and this energy also has the power to render this planet uninhabitable if we humans continue to degrade the atmosphere that protects us. It's useful to remember this fact when our human vanity makes us mistakenly think we are beyond the power of nature.

Almost everyone else I know who donned the glasses that looked like those we received at 3-D movies years ago reported similar powerful reactions.

And that, a common experience that was close to universal among the millions of people in the path of the eclipse



across our hemisphere, is one element of this event that will last in my memory. There are precious few moments now that we all experience in the same way, at the same time. These days, we are so segregated in our own realities – political, cultural, linguistic, among so many others – that we may as well live on different planets.

It's what used to be called a water cooler moment. When a person in an office encountered a colleague and relived an experience that they had both shared even though they hadn't been together during the event.

If only it would help us realize how fragile life is on this planet – and that we don't have the power to control nature, only destroy it.

Opening up

New men's association and Manchadauu project help members adjust to **new realities**

by Patrick Quinn, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A first meeting of the Regional Cree Men's Association laid a foundation for "strengthening community bonds, supporting individual and collective growth and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Cree people," according to association President Brian Wadden.

Held March 11-13 in Gatineau, members adopted resolutions and heard talks about lateral kindness by George Diamond and rites of passage by Abraham Bearskin.

The goals? "To open up eventually about what's bothering them, underlying issues and their personal life," explained Wadden. "It takes longer for men to open up emotionally for trusting issues. Ego and pride get in the way. You don't want to be labelled. You just leave it bottled in."

With many programs available for women and children, Wadden believes the men's association has been a long time coming. Cree society has changed significantly since the James Bay hydro-electric project and intergenerational trauma from residential schools.

The Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association helped the group start after it organized a men's healing retreat in 2022.

"We thought we were just there for healing, then we were told there was going to be nominations and elections the following day," recalled Wadden. "It was kind of a surprise. They thought it was time for men to start up as well."

Alongside vice-president Albert St-Pierre and secretary-treasurer Silas Blackned, Wadden helped establish local groups in Chisasibi, Eastmain and Wemindji. Whapmagoostui already had a group for nearly a decade and provided guidance for projects and funding sources.

Programming ideas include cooking, craft-making and reintegration processes for those who have criminal issues or struggle with homelessness. Canoe expeditions and snowshoe walks were also suggested.

Traditionally the family provider, Wadden said men now often work seasonal jobs while women increasingly have stable employment. Some men feel pushed aside as issues about children are routinely decided by mothers.

"They've kind of lost their place in their household and maybe turned to booze and drugs," Wadden noted. "In the last month there's been so many overdoses in different communities we don't hear about. Everybody seems to be afraid of talking about social issues."

The snowshoes prominent at the organization's first meeting symbolized "starting a new trail for the betterment of our people." With one north and one south, they signify a journey to fresh ideas and the way home to traditional values.

The association plans to work with CWEIA to develop policies and family-oriented programs. At least two regional activities are expected each year, which could begin with a land-based program in Nemaska featuring storytelling and cultural workshops.

CWEIA is also behind the Manchadauu program, which was started last year to address domestic violence through the teachings of Elders and the construction of traditional shelters. While last summer's forest fires delayed progress, a winter lodge or Waashaaukimikw was opened March 28 near adjacent to the Elders camp outside Chisasibi.

"One of the intentions was for participants to have that relationship with the Elders, for people affected by family violence to be comfortable to talk with them whenever they want," said Manchadauu coordinator Adrian Rabbitskin-Bullfrog.

After a planning session with Elders March 22, participants gathered wood to build the lodge. It was finished six days later, and a community feast was held with donated beaver, fish and ptarmigan. Waashaaukimikw is a partnership between Manchadauu and the Cree Youth

Council, which celebrated their cabin opening the same evening.

Wisdom about domestic family violence and addictions accompanied talks about building, food preparation and canvas making. Elders, including Eddie Pash, Raymond and Mariam Sam, Roy and Bertha Chiskamish, and Clarence and Lillian Lameboy, guided the dwelling's creation and counselled more than 60 participants during the week.

In 2012, Pash developed the first land-based program in Eeyou Istchee to promote personal, family and community wellness rooted in *iiyiyu pimaatisiwin* (Cree way of life).

This spirit of healing will continue at the winter lodge, which is free for community members to use and will likely host programs from the health board and justice department. With funding from Société du Plan Nord, Rabbitskin-Bullfrog is promoting Manchadauu to inland communities and plans similar projects in Waswanipi and Nemaska.

"Even if it's just across the highway, it still feels like we're in the bush," Rabbitskin-Bullfrog said. "There's healing even in the smell of the boughs. Come and listen. Just listening to the Elders while they're talking, there's still healing there."



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Teach your children well

Cree daycares integrate new culture and **language programming**

by Patrick Quinn, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



Childcare centres across Eeyou Istchee are undergoing significant changes to better reflect the Cree way of life.

“Our main focus is that Cree culture and language is the basis of our programming,” said Kelly-Lee Pepabano, director of the Miyuuhpichinaasuwin Apatisiwin department, which supports the region’s early childhood programs. “We wanted to ensure we don’t lose our language and promote it as much as we can.”

The department was formerly called Child and Family Services, but was often mistaken for youth protection and child welfare agencies. After consultation with the Cree language commissioner and the Elders committee, Cree consultant Lucie Salt suggested Miyuuhpichinaasuwin Apatisiwin, which was officially adopted in January 2023.

The transition was first envisioned about five years ago before the Cree Nation adopted language-protection legislation that is now being implemented. With children increasingly speaking English as their primary language, leaders realized the urgency of educational programming. The strategic shift coincided with a new funding agreement with Indigenous Services Canada.

“When we came into that funding, we realized we had the money to create materials, resources and tools that support language revitalization,” Pepabano told the Nation. “We created 10 new Cree books and other materials like a snakes and ladders game and flash cards with

the weather, numbers and colours all in Cree syllabics.”

Pedagogical advisor Melissa Rodgers and her team began creating curriculum and training manuals for childcare centre directors, pedagogical counsellors, resource educators and Head Start program workers in 2019. Staff training began in January 2023. Rodgers also facilitated training for Cree students in the Cégep de St-Félicien’s childcare centre management program.

Consultations were held with Chiefs and Councils, Elders and childcare centre staff. Information was collected from working groups at childcare forums held in 2020, the Chisasibi Cultural Heritage Centre and other resources.

“We believe that children’s development needs to be strongly rooted in our Cree culture, language and identity,” explained Rodgers. “For children to have stimulating environments with connection with the land, our traditional ways, even food. Cree should be the language spoken every day in the centres to all children.”

Even children whose first language is English or French are first addressed in Cree before it is translated. Children’s books by local authors and illustrators have been very well received, promoting early exposure to syllabics that will be expanded upon in later schooling. Featuring familiar storylines about activities like snowshoe hikes and fishing, images are only accompanied by syllabics to encourage reading in Cree.

“At 4 or 5 years old they know it’s a word even if they don’t know how to read it yet,” said Rodgers. “Having stories about Cree culture, children can look at these books and see themselves. I would like to have another series of books in the future.”

Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty recently published her own children’s book. Minnie and Monica Make New Friends, named for her small hairless dogs, addresses bullying and is written in both northern and southern Cree dialects.

New educational programming in childcare centres replaces guidelines from Quebec’s Ministère de la Famille. Educators monitor each child’s development by playing alongside them. They observe strengths and emerging skills, and meet with parents twice a year.

“What I love is that Cree Elders are integrated into our daily routines, to tell stories and do fun activities designed to increase the Cree aspect,” Rodgers said. “Every centre is at its own place in that journey. For example, in Chisasibi this winter, their pedagogical counsellors brought in caribou that women were cleaning.”

Childcare centres can apply to the federal Indigenous Early Learning Childcare fund to support activities and materials, such as ribbon skirts or sheshegu (baby rattles). Special programs officer Ann Marie Matoush has been touring communities to promote funding opportunities.

“Activities must be accessible to all children regardless of their ability or special need,” said Matoush. “Daycares can also apply for the community fund. They’re asked what outcomes are expected. We ask for progress and final reports. Once they’re approved, there’s a payment process to follow.”

Matoush has noticed the impact of language initiatives, saying her second child now in daycare is already speaking more Cree than her first. She will visit more communities and speak on radio to explain available funding.

Miyuuhpichinaasuwin Apatisiwin is planning additional projects this year, such as training for each local board of directors. With online devices contributing to language loss, they may try leveraging technology to support Cree language and culture.

“We’re not done yet,” said Pepabano. “I’m proud of the work the team has put into this. They’ve just started and we’re still in the process of training them. It’s a totally different viewpoint on how to educate our children.”

“leaders realized the urgency of educational programming”





WHERE *Art* & Nature MEET

Artist Tim Whiskeychan discusses the influence of his father and the Elders in his work

by Joshua Janke

Tim Whiskeychan knows that life has many layers. Born in Chibougamau in 1968, and adopted as an infant by Harry and Laura Whiskeychan. He grew up in Waskaganish, where time with his father in nature ignited his early passion for art.

“My art started at a very young age,” Whiskeychan observed, “and I’ve never stopped.”

This dedication traces back to childhood, when the kitchen table was a space for creativity. “A lot of my influence and art came from my father,” he said. “Especially sitting at the table just doing little doodles and copying images from comics.”

*Photos provided by Lauryane Chevarie
Artwork by Tim Whiskeychan*



His latest exhibit, *Tribute to Jean-Paul Riopelle*, runs until April 28 at La Maison autochtone in Mont-Saint-Hilaire, just south of Montreal.

Art is the core narrative of Whiskeychan's life. Curious and always learning, he roots his work in Cree traditions while using contemporary art techniques, making him a versatile artist and an inspiring mentor.

"My dad took me out paddling every summer, surrounded by animals and nature," he said. "It was his way of teaching me, allowing me to absorb nature and listen to its lessons."

During the Christmas season, his father had a unique way to nurture Tim's talent. "Dad couldn't afford toys, so he bought me a lot of colouring books," he recounted. "I remember using those Crayola pencils, carefully filling those books with colour. My father was always attention detailed and very humble, and I keep those early lessons close to me to this day."

Through his father's guidance and support, he learned that art is not confined to galleries or museums, but resides in the heart of every individual.

"Little did I know I was learning how to blend colours back then, developing accuracy and skill at a young age, learning to be stable and able. I was learning the foundational joy of producing colour on paper and mixing the colours of nature," he explained. "When I got older, I always kept that urge and happiness in my art."

Whiskeychan's artistic journey embodies a deep-rooted commitment to preserving Cree traditions and culture. After his formal education at Cambrian College in Sudbury, where he explored acrylics and other mediums in the late 1990s, Whiskeychan's artistic horizons expanded. His work as an illustrator, designer and craftsman – creating not just art but functional pieces – embody his artistic vision.

"In college, that's where I got told to go beyond," he acknowledged. "They

didn't discourage me, but they told me to go further. I learned about Cubism and Monet. It's funny to say now, but I didn't like abstractionism at first."

As an artist, Whiskeychan says it was essential to speak with Elders and acknowledge the wisdom passed down through generations. "One Elder told me, 'The thing that you do is very important for you and for your people. You play a role in the community and keep it alive. One day what we teach you will help you'."

Whiskeychan recalls inspiration drawn from nature and Elders' teachings. "I was working in the Eastmain River before the diversion," he reminisced, describing the changes he witnessed in the natural world. "The colours that the animals see throughout the seasons of the year were what stood out to me."

He describes how these teachings influenced his artistic vision.

"When an Elder goes out in nature, they can tell you what is going to happen.

They can predict these colourful and sudden changes because they have learned and understood the knowledge of nature's patterns. The way colours move and sway, that is migration," Whiskeychan explained. "When I speak with an Elder, they tell me: 'The colours all have reason, such as for the seasons, migration, moving, change and natural flow of expression.'"

His path has led him to share what he has learned. "I started to speak and teach at colleges and universities," he said. "I don't have a degree, but I have a lot of knowledge and skills."

His unconventional education speaks volumes about the richness of Indigenous knowledge. As Whiskeychan proudly states, "Everyone asks me where I went to university. I tell them, it all comes from the Elders. I tell them where it all began – how I was raised and taught by a goose hunter."



FUTURE SCIENTISTS

Cree students thrive at Quebec Indigenous Science Fair

by Patrick Quinn, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



Cree students made a big impression at the Quebec Indigenous Science Fair held in Gatineau March 19-21. Seven young scientists from the Cree School Board advanced from the regional fair in Mistissini a few weeks earlier to participate in the event.

“Our CSB participants make us all so proud with their hard work, perseverance and their amazing science projects,” declared school board chairperson Sarah Pash. “These students have spent months preparing, developing and finalizing their projects. They are smart, empowered, brave and well-grounded young people with bright futures in front of them!”

Kristopher Neeposh and Rory Henry-Felstead from Nemaska won first place in the Secondary 4/5 category for their project titled, “Plants can start fires, but can they stop them?” Inspired by last summer’s forest fires to seek natural solutions from the land, they explored the fire-mitigating potential of white and black spruce, jack pine and Labrador tea.

“We wanted to find a natural way to reduce fires,” 16-year-old Neeposh told the Nation. “We extracted the fire-retardant properties by collecting the leaves and needles from the plants and using

99% alcohol. We had to strain the liquid, dry it out and coat it onto plywood, paper and canvas.”

The pair researched plant properties in articles and interviewed knowledge keepers like Neeposh’s grandfather Steven Neeposh and their Cree culture teacher, Charles Esau. They found that jack pine extract consistently slowed the spread of flames more than the other plants – even out-performing ammonium sulfate, a commercial fire retardant.

“We found it might be better for fire-proof clothing or the canvas or tarps on teepees because sometimes sparks will burn holes,” explained Henry-Felstead. “We’re going to do more tests to see how consistently it works and what kinds of materials it works on. We might add something like cloth made from cotton or plastic tarps.”

After winning second place at last year’s provincial competition, Neeposh and Henry-Felstead intend to do even better in their final year of high school. Unfortunately, they weren’t selected to advance to this year’s Canada-Wide Science Fair later this spring. Last year, Malachi Coonishish from Ouje-

Bougoumou earned the Renewable Energy Award at the nationals.

Among other Cree contestants, Chisasibi’s Henry Grimstead examined which cabin building materials were more fire-retardant. Meanwhile, Sief Malkawi examined how traditional medicines can support modern practices.

Nemaska’s Abigail Mianscum and Leah Pash tested the influence of temperature on air density in their project “Helium Rising.” Mistissini Grade 6 student Caleb Coon Come presented a unique project looking at how container size affected the projection of foam in elephant toothpaste.

Cree-Mohawk Grade 5 student Kiyedinaci Ottereyes-Lahache represented Kahnawake and Waswanipi with his project “The Sense of Scents.” Dressed in a dapper suit and personable with the judges, Ottereyes-Lahache won his category and took home the overall communications award with a combined prize of \$1,000.

“When he walks in a room, he wants to be the centre of attention,” explained his mother, Dawn Ottereyes. “With hard work and linking his interests he was able

to showcase his strengths. He’s been very passionate about colognes.”

To earn more money to purchase colognes, Ottereyes-Lahache helped his mother with a nature journal initiative for her work as a consultant for the CSB. His winning project examined the difference between natural and synthetic scents and found they last longer with lotion.

Ottereyes-Lahache said everyone at school is calling him “the champ and the king.” Saying that the education system can sometimes be discouraging for children with different talents, his mother is proud that her son has found his niche.

“I see children not feel that they can excel in all areas, and it dampens their excitement to learn,” said Ottereyes. “Science is a way for him to express himself and really take charge in his learning. He was able to show others what we see, find his space where he can shine.”

As an event bringing together budding scientists from Indigenous communities around Quebec, the fair was also an opportunity for Ottereyes-Lahache to make Cree friends. Pash was impressed by the supportive network that developed.

“They all cheered each other on and encouraged each other,” Pash recalled. “It was so exciting to see our students

“Bringing together budding scientists from Indigenous communities”

represent all of us and themselves in that calibre of a forum. Their presentations were so inspirational in the potential they showed for their own future.”

Recognizing that the Cree Nation’s growth depends on developing students with a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) focus, the CSB has introduced higher math and science courses for older students interested in those postsecondary pathways.

The Elephant Thoughts program engages younger students in scientific activities with a unique mix of Indigenous culture, academics and exploration. To empower greater healthcare independence in the region, the CSB is implementing preparation for nursing programs with a significant scientific component.

“I hope our postsecondary students think about getting a teaching qualification and come back to inspire our secondary students,” said Pash. “We know for

Indigenous students seeing themselves reflected in their teachers is very important. We’re at a point in our decolonizing journey as an education system of ensuring we are represented.”

Pash expects the CSB’s liyiyuiyhiwin Research & Development department to expand its integration of Cree culture and language into math and science courses. With Whapmagoostui hosting next year’s Quebec Indigenous Science Fair, she wants students to remember that they come from a long line of scientists and researchers.

“Innovation and adaptation have been key to our survival and ability to thrive in our territory,” asserted Pash. “We’ve developed our own technologies and medicines. We call it traditional knowledge, but it is our ancestors’ scientific knowledge passed down through generations of observation and experimentation out on the land.”

Language Lover

American YouTube star learns to speak fluent Cree in viral video project

by Joshua Janke

A group of Saskatchewan Elders were surprised when an outsider they met spoke to them in Cree. It quickly became an enjoyable exchange with the man who was accompanied by well-known powwow performer Patrick Mitsuing, and who arrived bearing traditional gifts that showed respect for Plains Cree culture.

The visitor was Arieh Smith, a 33-year-old American who can speak around 50 languages and has over six million followers on his YouTube channel. He visited Loon Lake in northern Saskatchewan to learn and promote Cree language and culture.

"I've done this with Indigenous communities across North and South America," said Smith, who lives in New York City. "But this time was really special because I had Patrick there to guide me and take me around the community."

Smith was treated to the full experience, participating in a sweat lodge, helping prepare a traditional meal, and being taken on a dog-sled ride. "It was colder than I expected, but also way cooler than I ever could have imagined," he said.

"At first the Elders were thinking, 'Who is this weirdo with the camera?' Then, when I started speaking Cree, they were like, 'Okay, that's pretty cool.' It was an emotional connection to a people and a community who I would never have encountered without learning their language."

Mitsuing was eager to make this cross-cultural connection with Smith and organized the visit in February.

Mitsuing is the founder of Powwow Times, a non-profit company that promotes Indigenous culture. He says that culture and entertainment are



key elements in the efforts to preserve Indigenous ways of life.

"We have this online language program that we just launched called Repeat After Me Cree, where we teach 52 weeks of Cree. I was wondering how to promote it, and get it out there," explained Mitsuing.

The website's name reflects its teaching approach – repetition, which is an integral part of each interactive lesson. Under the guidance of seasoned Cree teacher Julia Ouellette, the online program is an opportunity to learn one of the most widely spoken Indigenous languages in North America.

"If you're wondering how hard it is to learn Cree, don't be daunted," said Mitsuing. "The answer is that with the right resources and dedication, anyone can master this beautiful language."

Mitsuing was wondering how to promote the program when he discovered Smith's YouTube channel and saw that Smith spoke many languages including several Indigenous ones. He sent Smith a message, explaining what a few days in the community would look like.

"About a week later I got a reply saying that he was interested in what I

was trying to do and then it went really quickly after that," Mitsuing explained. "It was amazing to have a guy that was willing to come in, learn our language, and promote it to his audience of millions who follow him on YouTube."

Mitsuing says that Smith and community members discussed how to promote the Cree language and reach younger generations. "When you do it through platforms like YouTube, TikTok or Facebook, it's a way to connect with the youth. This video idea was about inspiring our youth to speak Cree," Mitsuing observed.

Learning from a fluent Cree speaker provides authentic pronunciations, shares cultural nuances tied to the language, and offers insights often missed in textbooks or automated programs.

Mitsuing notes that some people say the language is too hard to learn or that they don't have enough resources, but Smith shows them that it's possible.

"The comments that I've seen from his videos, from his shorts and reels that he did from this content, I see a lot of young Indigenous and even older crowds saying, 'If he could learn, I could learn. If he's doing it, I could do it.'"



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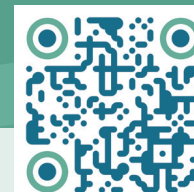


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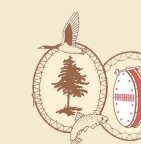


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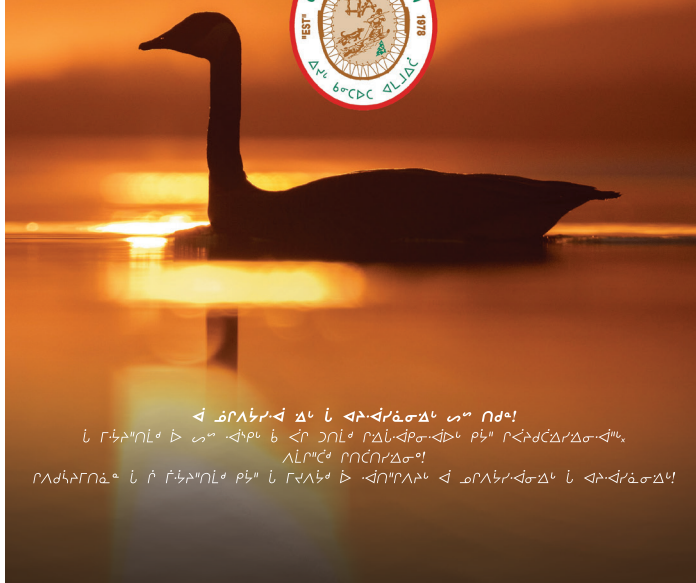

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Aces for Aysanabee

The 2024 Juno Awards featured the largest number of Indigenous nominees

by Joshua Janke

Alternative-indie musician Aysanabee reached a pinnacle in his career with two Juno wins last month.

Aysanabee won the coveted Songwriter of the Year award as well as the Alternative Album of the Year prize for *Here and Now*. This makes him the first Indigenous artist to win in either of these categories.

In his acceptance speeches, Aysanabee thanked all who helped him realize his dream and honoured all the other Indigenous nominees. “One thing I want to recognize is that this is the

most Indigenous artists that have ever been nominated,” he said.

Speaking after the event, he said, “To be seen, to be heard, to be recognized by my peers, by people who I have the deepest respect for, is humbling and it is a light that will help guide me as we continue to do the work, as we continue to push boundaries and as we continue to carry and tell the stories of our time.”

The Canadian music gala, held in Halifax March 24, featured a record number of Indigenous nominees this year – 38 – with many nominated outside the two contemporary and traditional Indigenous artist categories.

The awards weekend featured the Indigenous Honouring Ceremony, where all the Indigenous nominees were feted. Hosted by the Eskasoni First Nation, the largest Mi’kmaq community in the country, the outpouring of respect and gratitude was highlighted by the emcee’s fabulous solo chanting, dances, and musical performances from Mi’kmaq

fiddler Morgan Toney and Métis fiddlers Red River Ramblers.

Dancer Sarah Prosper and her brother, drummer Aaron Prosper, both from Eskasoni First Nation, opened the gala by welcoming everyone to Mi’kma’ki. Then local Juno nominees Jah’Mila and Morgan Toney – up for traditional roots album of the year – joined forces with rappers Wolf Castle and Owen O’Sound Lee and fiddler Wendy MacIsaac for a stirring version of Jah’Mila’s song “East Coast Family.”

Many of the nominees attended the ceremony, including Inuk singer Elisapie, folk and country singer William Prince and Darren Metz of Snotty Nose Rez Kids. When Regional Chief Andrea Paul noticed Aysanabee in the crowd, she paused her speech to let him know how she felt about his music. “I’m totally fangirling, I think you’re incredible, I downloaded all your songs on Spotify,” she enthused.

The awards ceremony put a national spotlight on Indigenous music. That

versatility could not have been better expressed than by the collaborative performance of Elisapie, Toney, and singer Jeremy Dutcher with their enthralling blend of traditional and electronic beats, playing classical and contemporary instruments while singing in several Indigenous languages.

Dutcher, a nominee for adult alternative album of the year, began his set with the sobering “The Land That Held Them as They Died.”

“As a young Indigenous person in this country, I look at the news and I see things that are unacceptable,” Dutcher said, naming Colten Boushie and Tina Fontaine as people whose stories come to mind.

“We sing for them so that their stories are not forgotten. These people are not headlines, they’re people. Each verse of this song is looking at one of those stories and trying to put light there. These songs hold up their stories for a minute, in the hopes that other people can too.”

Elisapie won her first Juno as Contemporary Indigenous Artist of the year for her 2023 album *Inuktitut*. “I dedicate this album to my uncles, to my family in Salluit, Nunavik,” she said in her acceptance speech.

“*Inuktitut*, the album, is not just a cover album, it tells a story of three decades in such a short, short, short time. We were nomads, and we had to settle into communities, and I think music was very important. Artist in *Inuktitut* doesn’t even have a name. We’re all creators, we’re all meant to be free.”

Joel Wood, from Maskwacis Cree Nation in Alberta, took home the award for Best Traditional Indigenous Album for *Sing.Pray.Love*. Wood has been singing his whole life as a member of a powwow family and of the acclaimed Northern Cree Singers. As his beats played over the loudspeakers, Wood powwow-danced his way to the stage.

“I want to give a shout out to all those little rez boys, rez girls back home who turned over their mom’s laundry basket and they jam them powwow songs and Sundance sound and prayer



songs,” Wood said in his acceptance speech.

Allison Russell, Aysanabee, Logan Staats, Shawnee Kish, Julian Taylor and William Prince came together for a moving tribute to the late Gordon Lightfoot and Robbie Robertson, performing “If You Could Read My Mind” and “The Weight.”

It was powerful to hear so many contemporary singers and songwriters honour two musicians who have influenced generations.

“As a First Nations man who once questioned my own place in the world and where my songs and voice belonged, I can empathize with a man discovering his Mohawk identity late in life,” Prince said in his tribute to

Robertson. “And then for him to give to the Indigenous people so selflessly in the last hours of his time, it was very selfless. So, it was easy.”

He also spoke of his pride to come from Peguis First Nation in Manitoba, “where there are so many talented youth who could be on this stage tonight. So, I’m just trying to be a good foot forward for that community.”

Prince took home the award for Best Contemporary Roots Album for his *Stand in Joy* album, in a category filled with Indigenous artists.

“To all the youth of the Peguis First Nation, it takes a real village to lift somebody like me so high, so thank you so much for this honour,” he exclaimed. “All of you, stand in joy!”



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As we approach Goose Break 2024, we would like to take a moment to acknowledge the importance of *iiyiyiu chiskutimaachaawin* and *iiyiyuiyihitiwin* for *iiyiyiu aschii*.

Goose Break is a cherished time for families and communities to come together, share in the bounty of the land, and connect with each other and our heritage. It is a time to reflect on the past year, to celebrate the present, and to look forward to the future.

We want to encourage all members of our community to take this time to recharge, reconnect, and rejuvenate. Whether you are spending time with family, taking part in cultural activities, we hope that you find joy and meaning in this special time.

We also want to remind everyone to be mindful of the importance of safety during this time. We wish all of our students, staff, and families a wonderful Goose Break.

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Caroline Mark, Director General

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Dr. Sarah Pashagumskum, Chairperson

Wishing everyone a safe
and successful Goose Break!



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Nation

Yippee, its finally Goose Break!

The Nation team wishes everyone a wonderful, safe and prosperous Goose Break. Enjoy this cultural activity with friends and family!



From all of us, we wish you all a safe and wonderful Goose Break. May your harvest be bountiful.



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As we prepare to return to the land for Goose Break, I want to express my appreciation to everyone who has contributed to our efforts towards Miyupimâtišiu in the past few months and to those who will stay behind to ensure the safety of our communities. Your hard work and dedication have brought us to this moment to pursue traditional activities that everyone looks forward to each year.

In the excitement of spending time with our loved ones out on the land, let's prioritize safety above all else. Adhering to proper practices to prevent accidents and injuries is crucial. Keep yourself informed on the safety guidelines issued every year by our regional entities.

Furthermore, I would like to express my sympathy to the hunters and their families who lost their camps during the last forest fire season. As communities, we must unite and support those still processing the damages to their hunting campsites by the fires. Goose Break can also be challenging for those who have lost loved ones this past year. In Cree values of solidarity and generosity, we stand by your side, ready to rebuild, ready to heal.

On behalf of the CBHSSJB, I wish you a nice Goose Break, successful harvests and fulfilling moments with your loved ones.

Bertie Wapachee
 CBHSSJB Chairperson



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Eeyou/Eenou Family Values

GOOSE BREAK CALENDAR

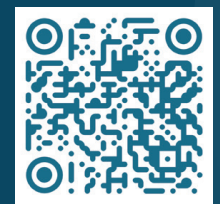
Our family values originate from our Eeyou/Eenou philosophy/liiyiuiyihituwin (Eeyou/Eenou way of life), traditional values and customs that come from the land, birds, fish and animals we harvested for food.

This Goose Break, we invite you to read through the Eeyou/Eenou Family Values book and reflect with your family:

DAY 1 Get to know the Eeyou/Eenou Family Values book <small>Read Cree Elder Teachings on the inside cover and pages 1-2</small>	DAY 2 SHARING <small>Page 34</small> THANKFULNESS <small>Page 36</small>	DAY 3 COURAGE <small>Page 4</small> HUMILITY <small>Page 6</small>	DAY 4 HARMONY <small>Page 12</small> KINSHIP <small>Page 14</small>	DAY 5 HONESTY <small>Page 16</small>
DAY 6 HOPE <small>Page 18</small> KINDNESS <small>Page 20</small>	DAY 7 RESPECT <small>Page 22</small>	DAY 8 LOVE <small>Page 24</small>	DAY 9 OBEDIENCE <small>Page 26</small> PATIENCE <small>Page 28</small>	DAY 10 TRUTH <small>Page 30</small>
DAY 11 SAFETY <small>Page 32</small>	DAY 12 GOOD CHILD REARING <small>Page 8</small> HAPPINESS <small>Page 10</small>	DAY 13 TEACHING <small>Page 38</small> FAITH <small>Page 40</small>	DAY 14 John Blueboy and the Tamarack Decoy <small>Pages 42-43</small>	

Eeyou/Eenou family values guide and steer you in the direction of healthy living

Visit creehealth.org to learn more:



You can consult the online version of the Eeyou/Eenou Family Values book on our website.





Anchors Aweigh

Montreal boat show highlights the latest models on the water

by Prem Lee Prasannam

The 24th edition of the Montreal International Boat Show was held at the Palais des congrès in February. The festive atmosphere and the fascinating display of new boats with the latest technologies amused throngs of boating enthusiasts. Eastern Canada's largest nautical boat show featured over 80 exhibitors and showcased around 225 boats and boating accessories, including personal watercraft.

Princecraft, Lund, and Lowe, all subsidiaries of the Brunswick Corporation, had a presence at this year's show. In the fishing boat category, they displayed a range of boats at various prices. The most affordable family-class boats were in the Holiday 162 series. For instance, five-person aluminum boat with engine power ranging from 60hp to 75hp and a price starting at \$31,199.

In fishing boats, the Lund 1975 Tyeel looks premium and comfortable with its IPS2 hull design and a larger aluminum hull body to maximize a smooth ride.

It is 19ft 10 in and comes with comfortable jump seats, a foldable ladder, underground storage, high-capacity rod storage and can hold 40 gallons of fuel. This is versatile 225hp fishing boat with decent space and storage can fit nine people and has a price tag starting at \$64,793.

In the top-end fishing category, the Platinum 220 starts at \$113,770 and comes with a range of hull and deck functions and other fishing features. This 22ft boat can be fitted with Mercury V6 to V10 engines and has a capacity of 11 people.

In the Rigid Inflatable Boat category, the 19ft 3in Highfield Sport 560 offers more space, functionality and capability. The bow sundeck provides enough room to lie down and relax while on the water. The swim platforms with a swim ladder at the stern offer easy reboarding after a good drip in the water. The 105-litre fuel tank gives you enough range to cruise long distances, and its small size makes it easily towable for a road trip.

The Starcraft SVX 191 has an interior layout that resembles a typical pontoon and claims to deliver the performance of a V-bottom. The L- and U-shaped seats and enormous storage space pro-

vide the needed comfort for passengers. The decently designed captain seat with the essential instrumentation provides all comfort for the navigators. The SVX 191 includes features such as a four-speaker stereo, a bimini top for sun protection, and EVA soft-touch traction mat flooring in the bow.

The Ventura series is a perfect hybrid offering the comfort of a pontoon and the qualities of a fishing boat. The base model Ventura 192 starts at \$66,575; this 19-ft aluminum deck boat has the capacity to seat eight people and can be powered by an engine ranging from 115hp to 150hp. This beautiful craft provides enough space and lounge seats for passengers and is good for both fishing and cruising.

In the pontoon class, the Princecraft Brio caught the visitors' attention. The Brio 21-2S is a 21.07ft battery-powered boat with a five-person capacity. It can be fitted with a Mercury electric engine with a horsepower range of 5hp to 25hp to navigate through pristine lakes with its quiet electric-powered engines. The portable battery claims to deliver three hours of cruise range in ideal conditions.

Excalibur Pontoon, Avalon's flagship model, displayed its exquisite

design, sophistication and quality. It is equipped with solid welded aluminum custom-painted walls and comes with a 27in high-performance triple pontoon system and the latest technology. Avalon claims to have tested these crafts in the world's most challenging waters. These sophisticated pontoons start at a whopping \$142,780.

Wired Electric Pontoons, a Quebec-based company, also showcased their electric pontoons. The 20ft base model starts at \$71,000 and can travel at a speed of 5mph. The top-end 23ft tritoon can cruise at 30mph with its 180hp Mercury engines, can carry 12 passengers, and is priced at \$214,000. You can extend the range depending on the cruising speed. Gently navigating at 5mph, you can push the range up to 265km. These boats come with inboard chargers, which don't require any special charging infrastructure or equipment. The regular 110v or 220v can charge the batteries overnight.

The all-new Malibu M242 embodies all the luxuries, elegance and craftsmanship of the Malibu line. The quality touches are everywhere inside and outside the craft. This new M242 has Max-Relax Sundeck Loungers, an E-Z Stash Board Locker, and Raise-and-

Laze Armrest to give a sophisticated feel along with power performance. This 24ft, 607hp engine has a capacity of 17 people and starts at \$377,475. For performance and premium experience, this is a boat to check out.

The Ranger Tugs from the US have exceptional versatility and quality and offer models ranging from 23ft to 43ft. The R-23 stands out for its unique styling with a curved front window and an overhead glass atrium that provides excellent visibility from the helm and salon area. The cockpit seating arrangement includes a reversible seat, port and starboard jump seats, and a teak table for outside dining. If you are heading to retirement and enjoy long-range cruising with luxury, check it out. The displayed R-27 Luxury Edition had a price tag of \$368,000.

The Galeon 325 GTO Yacht showcased this year offers the ultimate luxury and power in a yacht, and the company boasts of having designed this beast based on cues developed from high-performance sports cars. Powered by two Mercury Verado 400-horsepower engines, it can be easily maneuvered with a joystick. It has the latest navigation system, assisted by radar and other electronics integrated with two

16in screens. The cabin can accommodate four people and is equipped with a complete bathroom. This 32.9ft yacht has an onboard generator and is priced at \$875,000.

A unique product this year was the Red Shark Fitness Bike Surf model, a \$5699 platform for on-water cycling. This can ride on the water like riding a road bike, which is integrated with stable-rudder technology and a maintenance-free gearbox to give stability and durability. It is built on an inner-core fibre-reinforced inflatable board with hydro technology that reduces drag over varying water conditions for the most efficient ride using aluminum and stainless-steel hardware. A fitness freak could transport a Bike Surf on their roof rack.

Prominent boat engine manufacturers like Mercury and Yamaha are advancing electric innovations. Companies such as Wired Electric Pontoon and Princecraft already offer electric watercraft and continue to invest more in this direction. Electric boating in Canada is still moving at a snail's pace and will require innovation and helpful government policies to advance their development and manufacturing on a global scale.

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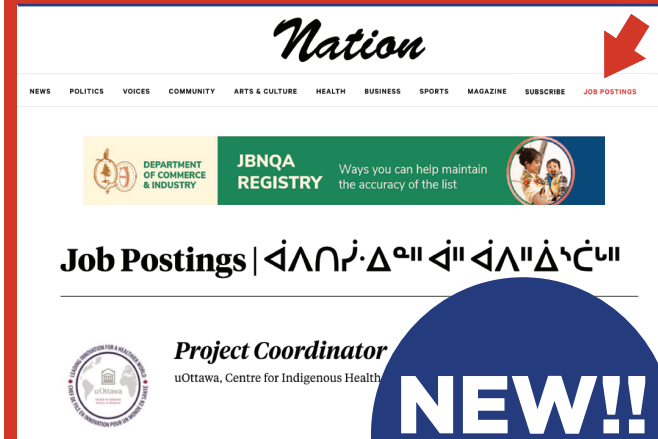
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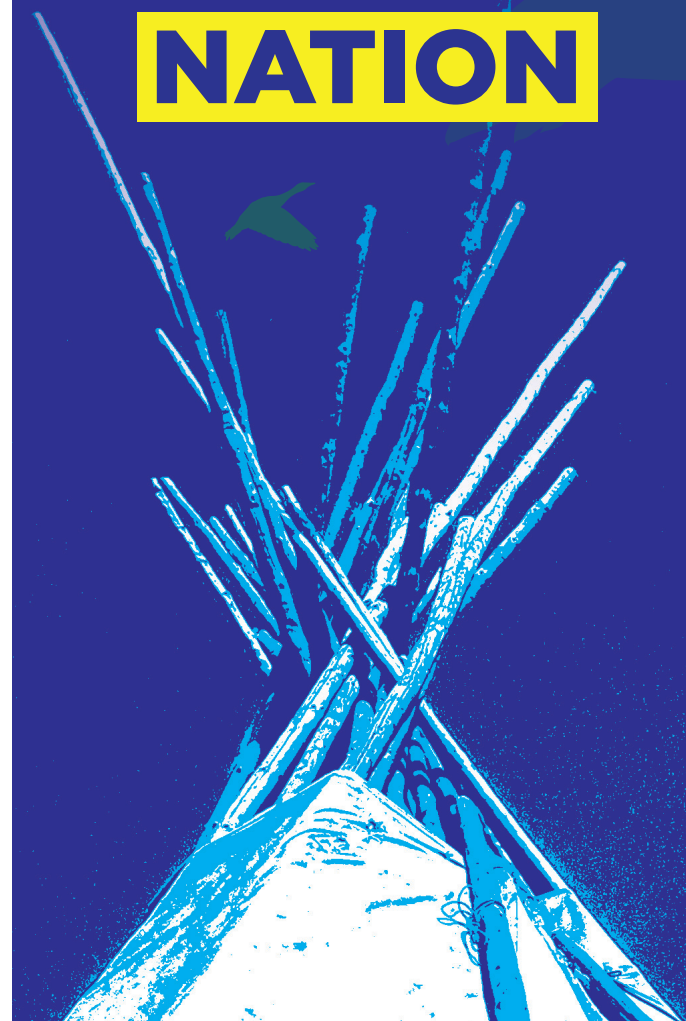
A

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TO THE

CREE

NATION



Here's another edition of the Nation's puzzle page. Try your hand at Sudoku or Str8ts or our Crossword, or better yet, solve all three and send us a photo!*

PREVIOUS SOLUTION:

Grid of previous crossword solution with words filled in.

Crossword puzzle grid with clues listed on the left side.

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- List of crossword clues and answers, including 'Word said with a salute', 'Keep hidden', 'Rage', etc.



A blister from the sun

by Sonny Orr

phoned my brother to give him some sad news about myself. I admitted that I've been sick and needed to let him know.

His face contorted a bit and his sadness changed to a "hey you got me" grin in a flash and he knew that he had to make a comeback.

Aside from a belated April Fools' joke, which was funny even though the victim thought about me as an ailing man on the verge of death, it was a good laugh between siblings.

Then Mother Nature played a joke on everyone in the south by raining and

letting the raindrops freeze all over the power lines and trees, enough to cause our country's capital to nearly shut down. This happened during a regional hockey tournament...

Meanwhile, up north, the weather was really warm, and sunshine lit up the snow until it sparkled so bright that the sun couldn't compete with its own brilliance.

Now, the sun and the moon had some trickery up their celestial sleeves and produced a well-received solar eclipse, which promised madness amongst the masses if they were citizens of centuries past.

No one had enough time to amass the people and jump off cliffs like lemmings in an old Disney production just because it was the end of the world.



eclipse only blinded several million people and disappointed a few others who thought they could get a concentrated ray of light that would speed up their tanning process.

I, unfortunately, was a bit too far north to notice anything different, noting that if the skies weren't so clear, the slight dimming was less than what a cloud would produce.

STR8TS

STR8TS puzzle No. 696, Tough difficulty. Includes a grid and instructions on how to play.

SUDOKU

SUDOKU puzzles No. 696, Easy and Very Hard difficulties. Includes grids and instructions for both.

Advertisement for Abenaki Associates featuring a logo, contact information, and a Cree greeting: 'To our Cree clients we wish a happy Goose Break.'



As Goose Break approaches, I share the heartbreak of my fellow Crees who won't have a campsite to return to this season. I'm also holding my breath, hoping this forest fire season won't be as bad as the last.

The Cree Nation Government established a relief fund for those affected by the 2023 wildfires. While it's helpful to our nation, it'd be nice to see more tangible actions from our leadership regarding their commitment to the issue and its consequences on our livelihood. With the mild winter we just had, I think it's important to keep holding governments and industries accountable for their contribution to climate change.

Climate change is widely recognized as contributing to wildfires in Canada, as it can exacerbate conditions that lead to more frequent and intense fires. Higher temperatures, drought conditions, increased lightning, insect infestations, thawing permafrost and longer fire seasons are ways climate change influences wildfires.

I might yap a lot about it, but climate change obviously isn't going to stop any time soon, especially since world leaders don't seem to do much about it despite constant warnings from the scientific community. Our people have always been stewards of this land; in my opinion, stewardship comes with responsibilities. As long as we neglect the issue, I will keep on discussing it.

“Climate change obviously isn't going to stop any time soon”



Summer is very close, and I haven't seen much information about specific questions raised by community members since last year's ordeal. Will we receive better compensation for evacuations? Will the air quality index be an evacuation factor for the entire population?

The air quality index frequently reached levels between 600 and 750 last year in my community. People can't keep on breathing that every year, and the poor quality of housing makes it nearly impossible not to be exposed to smoke even indoors.

Is Quebec contributing more funds to emergency response and relief to our entities? Will the lists of vulnerable people take into account more social determinants of health to assess the vulnerability of community members? I wasn't on the list for my community even though I live alone with two diagnosed disabilities

and no transportation, so it ended up costing me a lot to evacuate.

While wildfires are a natural part of many ecosystems, climate change is exacerbating wildfire risks in Canada and worldwide by creating conditions more conducive to fire ignition and spread. There are proactive ways to fight climate change, and there are rigorous stances to take against it, so I find it particularly frustrating to see people constantly fear-mongering about the Rapture or Jesus every time natural disasters occur.

It's frustrating because it is such a passive response to the destruction of a land that's been so generous to us since time immemorial. Even if we're not responsible for this environmental crisis, it doesn't mean we should just stand there and witness it without at least trying to do something about it.



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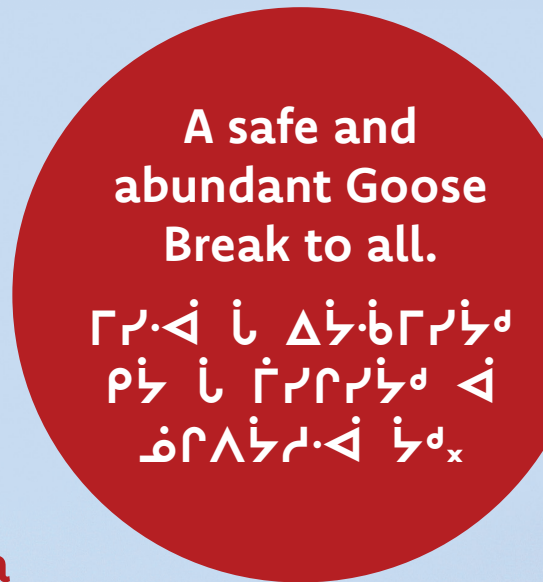
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